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The Theology of Thomas Aquinas

CH 753

Kenneth J. Collins, Professor

1. Course Description and Objectives:

The course will explore the theology of Thomas Aquinas in terms of his doctrine of God, Christology, the person and work of the Holy Spirit, the doctrine of humanity, and soteriology. In terms of methodology, the course will proceed in a Socratic and dialogical manner as it entertains an array of possible meanings of selected texts. This process, intense in many ways, should enhance the ability of students not only to understand the thought of Aquinas in greater depth in its thirteenth-century context, but also to think historically and critically. Moreover, the course will be attentive to the particular synthesis which emerged in the writings of Thomas with respect to Aristotelianism and the genius of the Christian faith as well as its relevance for twentieth-century theology and ministry.

2. General Goals

Upon completion of the course successful students will be able to do all of the following:

- 1) Identify the major doctrinal themes in the theology of Aquinas and explore their handling, in particular, of the issues of nature and grace.
- 2) Evidence an awareness of historiographical concerns in the interpretation of Thomistic theology, especially in terms of narrow, limited or unfair (biased) perspectives
- 3) Explore the interplay between religion and culture especially in terms of the intellectual developments (philosophical and theological) of the thirteenth century as reflected in the *Summa Theologica* and *The Summa Contra Gentiles*.
- 4) Display an extensive knowledge of the theological distinctions and nuances employed by Aquinas in the crafting of an articulate and well-developed theology.
- 5) Demonstrate an understanding of the continuing significance of Thomistic theology today.
- 6) Conceive one's calling as a minister of the gospel in light of the history of the Universal Church
- 7) Articulate the relevance of Thomistic theology for effective pastoral ministry today

3. Texts:

Required:

Kreeft, Peter, ed., *Summa of the Summa* [Selections from the *Summa Theologica*], San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1990
Copleston, F.C. *Aquinas*, New York: Penguin Books, 1977.

Davies, Brian. *The Thought of Thomas Aquinas*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Collateral:

O'Neil, Charles J. ed., *Summa Contra Gentiles: Book Four: Salvation*, London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975.

Pegis, Anton C. ed., *Summa Contra Gentiles: Book One: God*, London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975

4. Topical Outline

I. Introduction

II. The Doctrine of God

A. The Nature of God

1. Unity

2. Essence

B. The Attributes of God

C. Creation

III. Christology

A. The Person of Christ

1. Refutation of Christological Heresies

2. One person in two natures

B. The Work of Christ

1. Life and Ministry

2. The Atonement

IV. The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

A. The Person of the Holy Spirit

1. Consubstantial with the Father and the Son

2. The Procession of the Spirit

3. Refutation of Macedonianism

B. The Work of the Holy Spirit

1. Convicting

2. Illuminating

3. Purifying

V. The Doctrine of Humanity

A. Creation

B. Fall

VI. Salvation (Soteriology)

- A. Grace
- B. Justification
- C. Holiness
- D. The Beatific Vision

5. Course Procedures

Competency in this course will consist in satisfying the following criteria:

A. Two examinations will be given during the semester: a mid-term and a final. These exams will not only include the designated reading material but will also focus on class discussions. This component will constitute 50% of the grade.

B. In light of (A) it is imperative that students attend class on a regular basis. Absenteeism (missing more than 2 classes) will result in grade reduction. Class participation, attendance, and completion of the assigned readings will constitute 20% of the grade.

C. Students, in consultation with the professor, must prepare a 15-20 page paper on a topic of their choice with respect to the theology of Aquinas. This paper must be coherent, clear, and penetrating in its discussion. It should, therefore, be backed by considerable research and should evidence a competent use of the English language. It will make up 30% of the grade. The paper is due two weeks before the last day of class.

D. A reading report which indicates that students have completed all of the assigned readings is due on the day of the final exam.

6. Please note: this syllabus may be changed, as the instructor sees fit, due to academic considerations

7. Bibliography

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- Dodds, Michael J. "Thomas Aquinas, Human Suffering, and the Unchanging God of Love." *Theological Studies* 52 (June 1991): 330-44.
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